

### **Property Tax Reassessment Bill Heard Before the Ways and Means Committee**

On January 26, the Senate Ways and Means Committee heard SB 960, the Property Tax Reassessment bill I sponsored to make some technical changes to the bill I sponsored in 2001. Since the passage of HB 1150, which banned drive-by reassessments, we have had two years to see the law in effect. The 2002 bill served as a massive overhaul in the practice of reassessment, and the current bill serves to clarify language in the bill that is allowing the bill to be misinterpreted.

Currently, the value of homes and property are supposed to be recalculated every two years. Because state law prevents the reassessment process to act as an overall tax increase, tax levies are rolled back in times of recession. By rolling back, or lowering the tax rates, we may counteract a large tax increase and protect the taxpayers from a dramatic change in their taxes.

There must also be a standard across all tax districts, forcing all districts to roll back in times of recession, which was not necessarily the case in the past two years. When reassessment goes up and tax rates are not rolled back, the end result is an overall tax increase for homeowners. We are working to ensure that smaller tax districts are forced to roll back, just like their larger counterparts. The current bill does not bring anything new to the law, it will simply clarify and resolve language, so the process may work as the original bill intended.

The Ways and Means Committee also heard SB 950, proposed by Senator John Griesheimer. Our bills are both concerned with clarifying the reassessment practice, and we are working on possibly combining our bills and coming to an agreement that will be best for both large taxing areas like St. Louis County and smaller counties.

Sen. Griesheimer asked that the current bill only apply to St. Louis County, instead of going statewide in 2005. He testified that the system working in St. Louis County is not viable for smaller counties that do not have as many resources. I feel it is unfair for St. Louis County to be treated differently than the rest of the state, especially because this bill is aimed to benefit counties, not harm them.

I have heard from constituents that many people are seeing drastic increases in their tax bill. I want voters to know and trust that reassessment is not some guise to generate more taxes. Neither this bill, nor HB 1150, is an attempt to mask tax increases. We are working to protect taxpayers from a tax increase through reassessment. The current bill will simply clarify the standing law so there can be no contradictory interpretations, leading to a discrepancy in the methods of reassessment.

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